

Comparative Literature
INTERNATIONAL SHORT STORY

FALL 1999: url <http://www-unix.oit.umass.edu/~clit121/>

LECTURE MW 11:15, SKINNER 18 S. Lawall / Nina Korotkova, Beverly Weber

Disc. 1A, F 11:15, Machmer W-24 Korotkova 315 South College

Disc. 2A, F 11:15, Tobin 520 Weber Office hours:

Disc. 3A, F 12:20, Machmer W-22 Korotkova Lawall: M 2:30-3:30, Tu 11-12 and by appt.

Disc. 4A, F 12:20, Machmer W-21 Weber Korotkova: M, W 9:45-10:45 and by appt.

Honors Colloq: Tu 1:00-2:15, Herter 112 Lawall Weber: W 12:30-2:30 and by appt.

e-mail: lawall@complit.umass.edu

korotkov@complit.umass.edu

bweber@complit.umass.edu

Texts: The Borzoi Book of Short Fiction, ed. David Richter (B).

Writing Essentials: A Norton Pocket Guide (useful handbook)

Duplicated booklet with additional stories (X).

Printed books available at Jeffrey Amherst Bookstore (center Amherst).

Duplicated booklet available at Campus Design and Copy (Student Union).

Class handouts (many will be available on Web)

Requirements:

Two 4 page papers (10% each); preparatory notes for papers (3% each); one midterm exam in class (15%); six announced quizzes on the readings (4% each; lowest 2 dropped; no makeups); final exam (20%, choice of taking it during class or final exam period); attendance at lecture (8%) and discussion-section attendance and- participation (15%; described in discussion handout).

"If you know the answer and do not reply, your head will burst into a hundred pieces." (Indian legend)

* * * * *

Sept. 8

Introduction: syllabus and requirements explained.

Different modes of storytelling; the modern Western "short story" genre and its influence. Narrative for itself. Two competing kinds of modern short story.

Handouts: guideline sheets, excerpts from Arabian Nights.
DISCUSSION SECTIONS BEGIN THIS FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 10.

THE ENDURING FASCINATION OF NARRATIVE.

Sept. 13

From the Arabian Nights (The Thousand and One Nights): introduction (and explanation) of the narrative; "The Tale of the Ox and the Donkey," the First Night ("The Story of the Merchant and the Demon"), Nights 8-10 ("The Story of the Fisherman and the Demon") (handout, also in booklet).

Sept. 15

The Arabian Nights continued.
Nights 11-13, 16-19 ("The Tale of King Yunan and the Sage Duban" and more of "The Story of the Fisherman and the Demon") (booklet).

Sept. 20

The Short Story as a specific self-conscious genre:
narrative-oriented & theme-oriented poles.

Jacobs: "The Monkey's Paw" and Kafka, "Before the Law" (booklet).

plus PLOT, MYSTERY, SUSPENSE. More, too.

Sept. 22

Poe: "The Black Cat" and an excerpt from Poe giving his ideas of the perfect short story (booklet). Is the narrator possessed by the devil, insane, or a gifted defense lawyer? Compare a twentieth-century horror story influenced by Poe: Lovecraft, "The Outsider" (Borzoi).

Sept. 27

QUIZPoe: "The Devil in the Belfry" and "X-ing a Paragrab" (booklet).
Devilish humor: the Other Poe.

Sept. 29

More mystery. A. Conan Doyle: "The Adventure of the Speckled Band" (B).
The detective story: a tight cumulative plot, plus a battle of Good and Evil embodied in contemporary cultural images.

Oct. 4

French mystery: Balzac, "An Accursed House" (booklet). Embedded plots:
the cumulative discovery of a murder and its effects on people and landscape.

plus CHARACTER, SITUATION . . . but plot's still there too.

Oct. 6

Maupassant: "Hautot [OH-TOE] and His Son" (booklet). Plot with surprise ending; also psychological analysis of parent-child relationships, social setting, and the effects on people & gender roles. More social psychology on land speculation and alcoholism in "The Little Cask" (booklet).

PAPER TOPICS GIVEN OUT.

Oct. 11

Monday holiday. Read a good book!

Oct. 13

(Monday schedule)

Chekhov: "The Lady With the Dog" (B) and Chekhov's views on writing (booklet). What will happen to these characters? How would you write a sequel for this story? (B).

Oct. 18

Kafka: "The Judgment" (booklet). The murky waters of parental judgment--and a son's "death."

PAPERS AND NOTES DUE IN LECTURE

Oct. 20

Gilman: "The Yellow Wallpaper" (B) and Weir Mitchell's "rest cure" (booklet). Gender roles lead to madness -- and bad medicine.

Oct. 25

QUIZ

Mistry: "The Ghost of Firozha Baag" (booklet). A humorous ghost story with disturbing overtones.

Oct. 27

Wright: "The Man Who Was Almost a Man" (B).

How does Dave grow up . . . or does he?

Oct. 29

Midterm test in discussion sections.

Nov. 1

O'Connor: "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" (booklet). Multiple murder on a vacation.

plus POINT OF VIEW . . . look carefully, there may be several.

Nov. 3

Lu Xun [Loo Shin]: "A Madman's Diary" and preface to Call to Arms (booklet).

When madness gives a perspective on "normal" society.

Nov. 8

Bachmann: "The Barking" (booklet).

Language as a key to survival . . . or not surviving.

Nov. 10

Borowski: "Ladies and Gentlemen, To the Gas Chamber" (booklet).

A camp guard's strategy for survival.

Nov. 15

Thursday schedule: no class

plus FANTASY AND IMAGINATION

Nov. 17

QUIZ

J-L Borges [BORE-KESS]: "Borges and I" and interview page (booklet);
"The Garden of Forking Paths" (B). Spy story leading to a metaphysical discovery.

PAPER TOPICS GIVEN OUT.

Nov. 22

Calvino: "The Aquatic Uncle" (booklet).

Choosing a life style: permanence or change.

plus CULTURAL VALUES OR TRADITIONS

Nov. 24

Alternate assignment (no class). Read and compare the point of view in the following stories: Lessing, "The Old Chief Mshlanga" and Gordimer "Is There Nowhere Else We Can Meet?" (Borzoi) and Diop, "Sarzan" (booklet).

Nov. 29

QUIZ

Dadié [dah-dYAY]: "The Hunter and the Boa" and "Mirror of Dearth" (booklet).

The modern short story meets the African folktale.

Dec. 1

Diop [dee-OP]: "Sarzan" (booklet). Two views of "civilization."

PAPERS AND NOTES DUE IN LECTURE

Dec. 6

García Márquez: "The Sea of Lost Time" (B).

Landscapes that reveal people and character.

Dec. 8

Mahfouz: "Zaabalawi" (booklet). The price of Western "progress," and whether or not to pay it.

Dec. 13

50-minute EXAM. The exam covers stories read after the midterm exam. You should also be able to use the basic terms and concepts described in the "Concepts" sheet and emphasized throughout the semester. A similar (but not identical) final examination is scheduled during exam period for those who prefer to take it then.

final scheduled for Thursday Dec. 16 at 1:30 in Hasbrouck 124-126.

HANDOUTS. We will provide various informational or review handouts from time to time. The guideline sheet provided at the beginning defines and illustrates three basic elements of fiction: narrative (plot), the "world" of a story (setting, characters), and the narrator's presence (visible, invisible). Class lectures will draw on these concepts and assume that you can recognize and use them yourself.

PAPERS. You will be given a choice of two paper topics; each topic will ask you to consider a specific issue in relation to stories read previously in class. The paper assignment has two purposes: analysis of the stories and exercise in writing logical prose. We will provide guidelines in each case: not elaborate rules, but common-sense tips on how to proceed. Writing Essentials is there as a reference guide for 1) drafting and writing papers, and 2) checking style, from grammar to punctuation.

For advice on style, organization, and grammar, you may take your completed draft to the Writing Lab in Bartlett, where individual tutoring sessions are provided on a walk-in basis (no appointment necessary or possible). When and where: Monday-Thursday 10:00-12:00, 2:00-4:00 in Bartlett 303. Monday-Thursday evenings, 7:00-9:00 p.m., in Bartlett 101 or 105, depending on availability.

NOTES. The notes that are required with each paper are preparatory notes for that paper: they are not your class notes, and they are not a draft! The idea is to show how you have organized your thinking as you analyze issues and coordinate your ideas. Further instructions will be provided on a handout.

You are of course free to discuss the stories with other people (we certainly hope you will do so in class), but your papers must be all your own work. This doesn't mean you can't consult biographies and other secondary sources if you wish to be further informed, but such research won't help a great deal

because our comparative topics don't use that kind of information. When you draw on any material that you didn't know, or hadn't thought of, before writing the paper, you must mention that source. There is nothing wrong in research, but plagiarism is a violation of the Academic Honesty Code-and an insult to your intelligence. The practical distinction between research and plagiarism consists in whether or not you acknowledge your sources, even if you have done something different. "Plagiarism is defined as the unacknowledged use of another's words, ideas, or information."

GRADING. You will receive letter grades during the semester (A, AB, etc., perhaps even pluses and minutes) but all letter grades will be calculated according to a numerical-equivalent system at the end of the semester. Percentages are given under "Requirements" above.